

MEN OF THE HOUR.



ADMIRAL COURBET,

Commander of the French Fleet in Chinese Waters.

Operations begun by France against China on August 23d, without the formal declaration of war, have been rapidly executed and brilliant, giving the Western power great advantage in negotiations between the two governments, which, if report does not err, are to be resumed before the victorious fleet shall recommence the conflict. With the destruction of the Chinese fleet in the River Min and of all the batteries on the banks of that stream, the victorious French are at liberty to operate elsewhere, and have accordingly left the neighborhood of Foo-Chow. Statements are at variance as to their destination, which is probably Canton. French losses are trifling in the recent fighting, but thousands of Chinese were killed and wounded. Although the success of France may serve to stimulate the war feeling in that country, and the resources of China may still buoy her up with the expectation that she can better afford to continue the contest than her enemy, both parties would gain by the resumption of peaceful relations between them, and the interests of all powers doing business in the Treaty ports would thereby be promoted. The most able statesman in China, Li Hung Chang, is opposed to war with France, and if French successes should recall him to power, and the war party in its turn should be humiliated, the better for the belligerents and for the rest of the world.

To Admiral Courbet more than to any other man France is indebted for her advantageous situation in her relations with China, whether peace or continuance of the war, shall be determined. He has been in the French Navy thirty-six years, and has taken part in many important operations. It was not, however, until 1880 that his name became widely known. In that year he was made Governor of the colony of New Caledonia. His administration was the subject of much criticism, favorable and unfavorable, but was maintained, notwithstanding, on the same lines of policy and with becoming dignity. When, in the judgment of the ruling statesmen of France, it became necessary to occupy Tonquin, Courbet was entrusted with the command of the naval squadron which successfully assisted in the necessary operations. The results, not achieved without considerable bloodshed, gratified France with territory and the virtual surrender of the ruler of the country to French dominations, thus putting an end to that of China. When, however, Gen. Millot, in command of the French land forces, advanced to Langson, and was attacked by Chinese soldiers, and China refused to pay an indemnity of \$80,000,000 for the alleged breach of the treaty giving France the above advantages, Admiral Courbet was entrusted with the task of making a display of French power which should compel payment or provoke war. The manner in which he has performed his trust gives him his present prominence.

Ocean Traffic.

The mania for speed has been denounced by old sailors in no measured language. Inspired by prejudices which date from the days of the sailing vessel, they view with distrust and apprehension the new practice of forcing a steamer as fast as a gale of wind flies across the sea. They reason that the ocean cannot be used as if it were a railroad, and that such rates of speed as 17 or 18 knots an hour must inevitably be attended with fearful accidents.

This conclusion cannot be justified. If all the ships afloat, belonging to the whole world, agreed to abide by certain regulations—to stop dead in a dense fog, to proceed very slowly in thick weather, and so forth—then no doubt disasters would be much less frequent than they are. Nothing, however, could be gained in respect of safety by prohibiting vessels to steam beyond a certain rate under any circumstances, because, as was shown in the case of the City of Brussels, it is enough now-a-days if two iron hulls float slowly into each other for one or both to founder. Consequently security can never be increased unless, as we have said, every master of a ship is willing to adhere rigorously to rules adopted by all nations owning vessels which regulate his procedure under every condition of weather and darkness. The tendency of owners, therefore, to obtain vessels which shall beat all other steamers afloat is not one, we think, to be viewed with alarm. Any sailor would know that in a collision or in running into an iceberg, or ashore, passengers would be no better off in a vessel steaming at 10 knots than in a vessel steaming at 20. Indeed, powerful iron ships have sunk by merely, when driving at their anchors, falling across or striking another vessel moored to leeward of them.

What is wanted to procure safety at sea, or at least to improve the chances of a safe passage, is not what Dr. Johnson would term tardiness of locomotion, but that simple form of vigilance denoted by sailors as keeping a bright lookout. The Chinese paint eyes on the bows of their junks, that the vessels may see where they are going. Our ships want human eyes, backed by seamanlike brains, to watch their steps; and if this sort of intelligence is not furnished to them along with the rest of their outfit of patents, handsome saloons and herds of stewards they will drive them into danger, they will run into icebergs and other things and into one another, they will sink and form the dreadful theaters of appalling tragedies. It is declared, however, by those who know perfectly well what they are complaining of, that, though our monster steamers go forth pretty liberally officered, yet such is the character of the routine imposed upon the mates that it is almost impossible for a man standing upon a bridge, and in charge of the watch and of the ship, to give to his duties the zealous attention they must assuredly have if her navigation is to be conducted to a safe termination. Faculties upon the readiness and fidelity of which the lives of hundreds are dependent must not be rendered languid and oppressed by excessive work. The eyesight by which the ship, sweeping through the seas, is steered safely past perils of a wild and often of a terrific character—such as the partially submerged hull, the big vessel looming up suddenly out of the thickness, the iceberg that seems to leap like a thing of life out of the snow storm—ought not to be obscured and rendered heavy by want of sleep. Captains of vessels complain that one reason why collisions often happen shortly after leaving port is because the crews come aboard in a drunken state, and that the fellows among them who are ordered to keep a look-out stare ahead with bleared eyes, or are too intoxicated to remain awake. There is a degree of truth in this, though the obvious remedy is for captains and mates to keep a lookout for themselves until their crews become sober. Such an apology, however, is not advanced for disaster when encountered by our large ocean passenger ships. It is the officers who are the eyes of the vessel, and the confidence of their employers and of the passengers who go to sea with them is reposed in their alertness and in their high sense of the immense responsibility that devolves upon them. There can be no question that this responsibility is appreciated as it should be, and perhaps no better illustration of the extent to which it is felt could be advanced than the complaints made by the mates of the chief steamship companies that the routine of the ship's work puts more on them than they can sustain consistently with the dutiful discharge of their highest and most responsible obligations.—*London Telegraph.*

Beware of green fruit. The fruit cannot help being green, but you can.

We often hear of men who "die without a struggle," but men are rare indeed who live without a struggle.

A striking peculiarity of the game of poker is that one has his hands full to beat full hands.

"Don't I look nice?" said she. "I've got a full plastron. 'Have you?' said her lover; and then, thinking he must show more interest, said: "Where have you got the plaster on?"

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